

houses & lands, slaying the Saxon lords  
in open fight, and, often, the ladies  
& children in cold blood.

When Hereward heard these things, he  
knew that his home had need of him;  
he thought of his mother, now a widow, &  
of the little lad, his brother: so he crossed  
the sea once more, &, all alone & at  
nightfall, drew nigh to his old home  
of Bourne.

The hall was all ablaze with many  
candles as if a great feast were ~~being~~  
forward, & mad drunken shouts came  
from within: but what is that struck huff  
on the Gate? It is the beautiful head of  
his own young brother, with the long  
golden hair all dabbled in blood.

Hereward went in, & found his father's  
Hall full of drinking Normans: they  
rose ~~to~~ fall upon him, and, as they  
came, he slew them, man by man,  
until none was left to tell the tale.

Then he went about & found his Mother  
sitting, with white face, by the side of her  
headless boy: very thankful was she to  
have Hereward again to love her & take care  
of her; & very thankful was her son to  
have his mother's blessing after the long  
years of his outlawry.

Though he had slain the Normans, the  
Sons of Bourne was no place for the lady  
Judith, so Hereward took boat & carried  
her to Crowland Isle, to the Saxon Abbey  
of

of St. Justine.

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Then he split the war arrow into four  
I sent round the four pieces north, south,  
east, west, to all the men of the Gens: if  
the Master were not at home, the arrow was  
left sticking in his door, or in his  
big chair by the fire, for him to pass  
on to his neighbours when he came. By  
this arrow, the Gen. men, knew they  
were called to battle with the Normans.  
All the Gens of the men seemed to  
cry to them that Hereward was  
come to be their leader.

Meantime, Hereward went over sea again  
to bring ship loads of North. men to their  
aid; but the Conqueror was too wise for  
the North. men & they were beaten back.  
They would not take ship again without pay,  
however; so they set their hearts on the gold  
in the Golden Burgh. Once again their  
terrible "Yuch-hey-sa-sa-sa" was  
heard by the monks of Peterborough as  
the Norse. men rowed up the Den, & once  
again a terrible time of burning &  
slaying followed that wild war cry.

Then they all, Danes & English, came  
to Ely Isle, & after a long Council in  
the great hall, it was settled that the  
Danes should go back to their own land.  
Hereward went to the top of the Minster tower,

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and watched the three flecking with countless  
notes as they went. And when they were  
all out of sight, he went back, & lay down  
on his bed & slept - once & for all; for  
indeed, they were in very evil case.

When William heard that the Danes  
were gone, he marched upon Ely; as he  
came from Cambridge, he could see the  
Minster towers rising from among  
the trees, & doubtless he thought that  
Ely would be an easy conquest. But  
men told him that between him &  
those trees lay a black abyss of mud  
& peat & reed, with the deep sullen  
Ouse winding through it. The narrowest  
space between dry land & dry land  
was a full half mile. & how to cross  
that half mile, no man knew.

As the weed, what was there? a wilderness  
of moors, seas, & floating alder beds,  
through which the few men alone  
could wander with leaping pole & log  
canoe. On the east, again, were moors  
& fens, & some waters, broader & deeper  
than before, because Ouse had been  
joined by the Cam.

So William's host - camped themselves  
in Kellingham field; & down the bridge-  
way, poured the men, bearing timber  
& rafts cut from the hills, that they  
might bridge the black half mile, for that,

after



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after all seemed the only way by which  
they could get upon the Isle.

They tried to drive piles, but the piles  
would not hold; so they made a floating  
bridge with long beams, & blown up cattle  
hides to float them.

At last, the bridge was finished, &  
floated safe across the river, so that  
the English on the island could reach  
it with a long pole. They would have  
destroyed it, but Hereward bade them  
leave it alone; he knew that would happen.

And now came along the bridge a  
dark column of men in glittering helmets,  
knights & footmen. They came; they  
pushed along the bridge - a more & more  
crowded mass; men fell off into  
the mire & water. Still, on they came  
in thousands, & fresh thousands  
followed. but they were not yet at the  
The bridge strained more & more, parted  
one side - way roll it gave, & men,  
turning over, cast into that foul  
stream the flower of Norman chivalry,  
leaving a line - a full quarter of a mile  
in length - of wretches drowning in  
the dark water, or in the bottomless  
slime of peat & mud.

William, they say, struck his tent  
departed forthwith, groaning from deep  
pains of heart; & so ended the first battle  
of

of Aldreth.

So Ely Isle became a Camp of Refuge for Hereward & his men for many a month. What with the numberless wild fowl of the meres, & the fish of the rivers & the cattle they managed to bring in from time to time, they did not fare badly upon Ely. Still, it was dull work, shut up in that marshy island: they made many a raid upon the Normans, but were never strong enough for a great fight; & there are many tales of how Hereward, who loved adventure, went forth to explore at the risk of his life.

The next summer, William came to Aldreth again, or, rather, to Willingham; this time he had piles driven into the black ooze to make a causeway broad & strong for his men; & he had a strong, strong bridge made to carry them over Orme; & the Normans swarmed upon causeway & bridge as before. — This time the English in Aldreth got might well tremble.

But see, — what is that? a puff of smoke, a wisp of flame; & then another & another; and a canoe shot out from among the reeds on the Willingham side & plied into the reeds of the island. The English have set the reeds on fire about the Norman gale.

As came the flames, clapping & crackling  
Caughby

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camping & chivvying like a live fiend.  
It reached the causeway, & sprang over  
the heads of the mass of men: the timbers  
of the bridge caught fire beneath their  
feet. They sprang from the burning  
foot-way, & plunged into the fathomless  
lopf.

The next day, William withdrew his  
army. The men refused to face  
again that blood-stained pass.

This was how the men of the fens held  
out against a foreign foe. But it  
was all in vain; they did not know  
when they were beaten.

For full seven years did Hereward  
hold this Camp of Refuge, though times  
grew hard & food was scarce. At  
last, the monks of Ely, weary of  
such a life, played their own  
people false & let the Normans  
in by stealth.

Hereward & his English got out of  
Ely, but would not yet give up hope  
of the English cause: they took to  
the fen-woods & lived on the tall  
reeds in the great forest which  
stretch'd up in those days west  
of Bowene.

But the day came when Hereward  
knew he was the last man in  
England to hold out against the  
Conqueror. That it was not was to shuffe  
any



Into the valley of Death  
 Rode the six hundred.  
 "Forward the Light Brigade!"  
 No man was there dismayed;  
 Not though the soldier knew  
 Some one had blundered:  
 Theirs not to make reply,  
 Theirs not to reason why,  
 Theirs but to do and die;  
 Into the valley of Death  
 Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,  
 Cannon to left of them,  
 Cannon in front of them,  
 Volley'd and thunder'd;  
 Storm'd at with shot & shell,  
 Boldly they rode and well,  
 Into the jaws of Death,  
 Into the mouth of hell—  
 Rode the six hundred.

Flashed all their sabres bare,  
 Flashed all at once in air,  
 Lick'd the flanks of the gunners there;  
 Charging an army, while  
 All the world wonder'd;  
 Plunged in the battery smoke,  
 With many a desperate stroke,  
 The Russian line they broke,  
 Then they rode back, but not—  
 Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,  
 Cannon to left of them,  
 Cannon behind them,  
 Volley'd & thunder'd.